



MEDIA RELEASE

14-Year Old Runaway Sexually Assaulted - Investigation by Restorative Policing Team & Major Crimes Detective Leads to Arrest

SANTA BARBARA, CA – June 11, 2012

On the morning of February 13, 2012, Officer Keld Hove, one of the Santa Barbara Police Department's Restorative Policing Officers, saw an e-mail bulletin from the Los Angeles Police Department advising that a runaway juvenile might be in the Santa Barbara area. The runaway, a 14-year old boy with mental health and cognitive disabilities, had called his mother nearly three days prior and asked her to pick him up in Santa Barbara. The mother, who also suffers from mental illness, came to Santa Barbara and searched for her son, but could not find him. She returned home and subsequently reported him missing to LAPD. Officer Hove forwarded the missing person bulletin to the civilian members of the Restorative Policing Outreach Team and at 12:40 p.m. the boy was spotted by team member Isabel Blagborne loitering on 700 State Street with a group of young transients. Officer Hove contacted the boy who advised that he had become stranded in Santa Barbara and that he wanted to return home and be reunited with his mother. Officer Hove contacted his mother and informed her that her son had been located.

The boy's mother was unable to return to Santa Barbara to pick him up. Ordinarily, in a circumstance like this, Officer Hove would consider arranging transportation home for the subject via Amtrak or Greyhound. In this instance however, given the boy's disabilities, Officer Hove felt that the only way to ensure the boy's safe return home would be to personally drive him to Los Angeles, a decision that would prove to be significant. In the time that it took to make arrangements to drive the boy back to Los Angeles with an additional officer, Officer Hove was able to develop a rapport with the youth and engage him in conversation. This ultimately led to the boy informing Officer Hove that he had been the victim of a sexual assault.

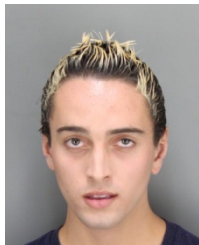
What began as a runaway juvenile case now morphed into a major crime investigation. Officer Hove conducted a lengthy sexual assault investigation that included a forensic interview and medical examination. His investigation indicated the following. Three days earlier, in the afternoon, the victim was hanging out in the area of Hollywood Boulevard and La Brea Avenue when he was contacted by the suspect, an adult male, who was initially with two female companions. They all hung out together but eventually the women left. The suspect, now alone with the victim, invited the victim to go to the beach. The suspect retrieved his car and began driving with the victim to what the victim thought was the beach. While in the suspect's car they smoked marijuana that the victim described as having something sprinkled on top, possibly some other drug. The victim then fell asleep in the back seat of the suspect's car and the suspect drove to Santa Barbara, ultimately stopping in the parking lot of the Train

Station at 209 State Street. There, after smoking more marijuana, the victim sensed that the suspect was making sexual advances toward him. This made the victim uncomfortable and the victim attempted to get out of the car, but was prevented from doing so by the suspect who climbed into the backseat. The victim was then sexually assaulted. Following the assault the suspect let the victim exit the car and then drove off, leaving the victim stranded in Santa Barbara.

The victim had his cell phone with him and called his mother to come pick him up. Shortly after making this call his phone ran out of power; and despite his mother's effort they were unable to reunite. The victim spent the next two-and-a-half days living on the street with his newfound friends, young transients on State Street, until he was contacted by Officer Hove. Officer Hove and Officer April DeBlauw drove the victim to Los Angeles and reunited him with his mother. Officer Hove contacted social service agencies in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles to ensure that the victim would be connected with services available to sexual assault survivors. The victim has since been placed in foster care.

Over the course of his investigation Officer Hove was able to find a photograph of the suspect, whom the victim identified, off of the Facebook account of one of the women that had been with the suspect on Hollywood Boulevard when they met the victim. Crimes against Persons detective Bryan Jensen continued the investigation and in May 2012, was able to identify the suspect as Michael Scott Starnes, age 19, of Santa Barbara. On June 6, 2012 Starnes was interviewed by Detective Jensen at the Santa Barbara Police Department. Starnes admitted to engaging in some consensual sexual acts with the victim.

Starnes was arrested and booked at the Santa Barbara County Jail for the felonies of sodomy and false imprisonment and the misdemeanor of contributing to the delinquency of a minor, with a bail amount of \$50,000.00.



Starnes, Michael Scott

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